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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to analyze religion news coverage in three metropolitan newspapers. While no formal hypothesis was tested, it was thought that coverage would reflect the general news policy at each particular paper to the extent that the religious beat has lost its stigma as a second-class beat. Twenty-eight religious stories from the "New York Times," 141 from the Minneapolis "Star," and 165 from the Richmond "Times-Dispatch" appearing in issues from June through August 1981, were content-analyzed. When all the stories had been coded, a list of stories from each newspaper was prepared. From those lists, a random sample of 26 stories was selected and each was recoded. Each of the three newspapers followed a distinctive news style intended to attract and meet the needs of its particular audience. The analysis of results indicated that religious news was not treated significantly different from other kinds of news during the study period, and that religious stories seemed to match their respective papers' general news format. The study found that there were similarities in the religion news coverage of these three papers, consistent with previous studies suggesting that religious stories are longer, broader in scope, and more issue-oriented than they once were. The data also suggest that both differences among papers and among previous research findings are more likely explained by the news philosophy of a particular paper and its structural constraints than by any preconceived assumptions about the nature of religious news. (HTH)

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What is Religion News?

An Analysis of Stories by Religion Writers at Three Newspapers

by

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What Is Religion News?

An Analysis of Stories by Religion Writers at Three Newspapers

Despite the fact that religion news has been a staple of American journalism at least since the Penny Press era,[1] religion has traditionally been considered a second-class beat by journalists. But that may be changing as a result of the growth of the electronic church and of recent political campaigns which focused attention on the religious dimension of political issues.[2]

In spite of a growing awareness of the importance of religion as a force in American life, little attention has been devoted to how newspapers cover religion news.[3] Most scholarly studies in the area have consisted of case studies of news coverage of a single religious issue or event,[4] or have been based on interviews with particular religion journalists.[5]

These studies indicate that in the 1950s and the early 60s, religion writers were most attracted to stories with a local angle. They emphasized the news values of proximity, novelty, human interest, disaster and conflict, but most news stories were brief accounts of local events. The religion writers and editors did not look closely at religion or religious organizations or at the meaning of events and situations. Breed, for example, found that the media usually protected religious organizations by not mentioning low attendance at church services, skepticism among church members, upper-class resentment of lower class membership, rivalries between churches, or reductions in giving to charitable causes.[6]

But by the 1970s, studies suggest, religion writers and editors seemed to prefer in-depth stories over simple accounts of local events. In a survey of presidents and past-presidents of Religious Newswriters Association, Brenner found that most religion writers saw their primary role as that of informing readers and interpreting and explaining to them "what is happening in the world of religion" through "in-depth reporting...centered on issues." Most also endorsed such roles as "forecasting future trends in the church and criticizing the church." Although these writers and editors did endorse "teaching basic beliefs" about religion, they specifically rejected such roles as promoting organized religion and providing inspirational stories for readers.[7]

Similarly, a study by Hoffmeyer based on an analysis of religion news stories in the Dallas Morning News and on interviews with its religion editor, Helen Parmly, and with Associated Press religion writer George Cornell suggests that over a 25-year period religion stories have become longer, fewer in number, more in-depth and of a more general nature. At least in the Morning News, by the early 1970s religion news no longer consisted primarily of simple reports of meetings and denominational activities.[8]

Although Hoffmeyer's study was rather unsystematic, more recent investigations by Mattingly[9] and by Hart, Turner and Knupp[10] generally support his contention that religion news has moved away from simple accounts of local events.

On the basis of interviews with religion writers, Mattingly recently reported that religion writers and editors for the wire services and for the nation's best newspapers are most interested in stories that go well beyond surface reporting of events to cover ideas and trends within religions that affect the society as a whole. Religion editors, he found, do not try to shy away from issues or cover up conflicts -- in fact, they "love a scandal as much as anyone else." Still, they perpetually seek balance so that their coverage will not be perceived as either pro- or anti-religion.[11]

But both studies based on interviews with journalists and the more recent content analyses of religion news raise the question of promise vs. performance. Although Hart, Turner and Knupp looked only at the religion news in Time magazine, their study suggests religion writers rely on theologians and church leaders from mainstream Judeo-Christian groups for their news, giving heaviest coverage to the groups with the largest membership among the publication's primary audience. Furthermore, while Time magazine's accounts of conflict within churches increased steadily from 1947 through 1976, reports of conflict between churches peaked around 1960 and reports of conflict between religion and society actually decreased steadily during the post-war era.[12]

Taken together, these studies suggest that religion writers and editors want to cover religion like any other beat and, more and more, their superiors are allowing them to do so. But because

most of the available research is based on interviews with religion journalists or on a rather limited case study of their work, the available studies provide little insight into the actual state of religion news reporting. Thus it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how religion has been covered at any particular point in time as well as how it may have changed over time.

Therefore, in order to provide a baseline to which past and future religion news coverage can be compared, this study analyzed all religion news stories produced by the religion journalists at the New York Times, Minneapolis Star, and Richmond Times-Dispatch during June, July and August 1981 in order to provide data on (a) the number, length and display of religion news stories, (b) the geographic focus of the stories, (c) the religions covered in the stories, (d) the news values emphasized, and (e) the general nature of the stories' content.

Because the primary purpose of this investigation was to provide descriptive data on religion news coverage, no formal hypotheses were tested. However, to the extent the religion beat has lost its stigma as a second-class beat, the coverage of religion should reflect the general news policy at a particular newspaper. Furthermore, if the interviews with religion specialists provide an accurate description of religion news coverage, the data should reveal (a) fewer very short stories than stories of average or longer length, (b) some major stories displayed in the regular news columns even at those newspapers that retain

a special religion page, (c) fewer purely local stories than stories with a broader focus, (d) fewer stories emphasizing "soft news" values than emphasizing such values as change, conflict and disaster, and (e) fewer stories emphasizing simple one-time events than emphasizing more lasting concerns such as issues or long-term projects. However, because most newspapers cater to a local community and its concerns and most newspaper reporters are dependent on local sources, the coverage of particular religions will most likely reflect the strength of particular religions within a newspaper's circulation area.

Methodology

Selection of the Newspapers: The New York Times, Minneapolis Star, and Richmond Times-Dispatch were selected for content analysis because each of these papers employees respected religion journalists and is frequently cited by members of Religious Newswriters Association as being among the best papers for religion journalism. However, they also have different news policies, structural constraints, and are located in different cultural milieus and address quite different audiences.[13] Therefore, an analysis of the religion news in these papers should provide current data on the "best" religion news coverage. At the same time, data obtained from these papers can be expected to shed light on factors that affect the nature of religion news coverage in daily newspapers.

Although the New York Times has no religion page, it is generally considered the pre-eminent American newspaper and is one of two general circulation daily papers with two full-time writers assigned to cover religion news. While other daily newspapers are published in New York City, none really has the resources to compete with the Times. The population of New York City is predominantly Roman Catholic and Jewish, but at least 30 denominations and many other religious organizations including the National Council of Churches have headquarters in the area.

In sharp contrast to the position and resources enjoyed by the Times, during the summer of 1981 the Minneapolis Star was struggling to survive in the face of stiff competition from its sister publication, the Tribune, and from the Pioneer-Dispatch in neighboring St. Paul. While the New York Times provided both a local and national audience with in-depth news of more than transitory, local importance, the Minneapolis Star featured both "news briefs" and longer news features for a primarily local audience. Minneapolis is the headquarters of the American Lutheran Church; approximately half the population in the Minneapolis area holds membership in a Lutheran church.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch billed itself as the "state newspaper of Virginia." Although the smallest of the three newspapers in both circulation and news hole, a relative absence of local competition combined with its location in the state capitol and its easy access to Washington, D.C., has allowed the Times-Dispatch

to develop as a regional version of the New York Times. While no denomination has headquarters in Richmond, the city is located quite close to Lynchburg, Va., the headquarters for Jerry Falwell's religious enterprises including Liberty Baptist College and the Moral Majority, Inc. The predominant religion in Richmond and in Virginia is Baptist.

Content Analysis: All issues of the three newspapers from June 1 through August 31, 1981, were scanned and all stories appearing on the religion pages of the Star and Times-Dispatch or carrying the byline of the religion specialists at the three newspapers were selected. This procedure produced 28 religion news stories from the New York Times, 141 from the Minneapolis Star, and 165 from the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

These religion news stories were examined using a content analysis scheme based on the one developed for the IAMCR study of wire service news,[14] but some sections were revised to reflect more adequately the rather specialized nature of religion news. Additional measures of news values drawn from the list developed by Eberhard[15] were also included.

A number of reliability checks were built into the content analysis procedure. The stories from each newspaper were coded at the same time to maximize consistency within each group, but the stories themselves were numbered and then shuffled so they were not coded in chronological order in order to minimize any systematic error in following coding procedures.

When all the stories had been coded, a list of stories from each newspaper was prepared. From those lists, a random sample of 26 stories was selected. These stories were recoded by the author and also by an outside coder experienced in content analysis and familiar with religion news. Simple agreement and Scott's pi were calculated within each newspaper and across all three newspapers for 16 variables where judgment was required to place the story in a particular fixed category. Both simple agreement and Scott's pi indicated excellent intra-coder reliability (.8) and good inter-coder reliablity (.7) on all items included in this study.[16]

Findings

Each of the three newspapers selected for analysis has developed a distinctive news style intended to attract and meet the needs of its particular audience. Although detailed information about the total news package at each newspaper is not available, evidence from this study indicates religion news was not treated significantly different from other kinds of news during the summer of 1981. Instead, the religion news stories within each newspaper seemed to match the paper's general news format.

Number, Length and Placement of Stories: Although it is consistent with the New York Times' expectation that its reporters produce in-depth stories of more than transitory, local interest, it was rather surprising to find that a newspaper which employs

two full-time religion writers actually carried far fewer religion news stories than newspapers employing only one full-time religion specialist. During the summer of 1981, each religion specialist at the Times wrote 14 stories, nearly three-fourths of which were between 10 and 30 column inches. (See Table 1) These 28 religion news stories appeared in the general news columns because the Times has no religion page.

In sharp contrast to the Times, the religion writer at the Star produced 141 stories while the religion writer at the Times-Dispatch produced 165 stories. Although most of the religion news stories at these papers appeared in space set aside specifically for religion news, nine stories in the Star and 17 in the Times-Dispatch competed successfully for space in the general news columns.

Because of a format which required the religion writers to produce weekly religion news round-ups, both the Star and Times-Dispatch had a higher proportion of very short religion news stories than did the Times. However, in this case the proportions are somewhat misleading. Religion writers on both papers actually produced more moderate and long religion news stories during the summer of 1981 than did their counterparts at the New York Times. However, it should be noted that at the Times-Dispatch where the format required both a weekly local "bulletin board" column and a weekly round-up of national and international religion news, only about one-third of the stories were shorter than 10 column

inches. At the same time, almost three-fourths of the religion news stories in the Star, with only the local "bulletin board" round-up, were shorter than 10 column inches. (See Table 1)

Geographic Focus: Consistent with the self-reports by religion journalists contained in other studies, this study found religion news is no longer confined to purely local matters. Even at the Star, the most intensely local of the three papers analyzed, only about half the stories were concerned primarily with local events, issues and people. Both the Times and the Times-Dispatch devoted a higher proportion of religion news stories to national news than to local and regional news. (See Table 2)

Although the Times carried the highest proportion of purely foreign religion news items, both the Star and Times-Dispatch actually contained more foreign news stories than did the Times. In fact, because of its weekly round-up column format, the Times-Dispatch carried three times as many foreign stories as did the Times. (See Table 2) At each of the newspapers, European nations were mentioned most frequently, but each paper also had some religion news from Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Religious Focus: Although religion news no longer seems to be synonymous with local news, this study found it still means primarily news of Christians and Christian organizations -- and particularly news from the Protestant churches. Although each of the papers carried some news about Catholics and Jews, more

than half the stories in each paper was about Protestants. (See Table 3)

When the stories were analyzed according to the particular denominations covered, those groups with the largest membership in a particular area were found to receive the most attention. The religion writer at the Star devoted almost half his stories (58) to news of Lutherans, while the writer at the Times-Dispatch concentrated on Baptist news (32 stories).

At the New York Times the pattern was less clear because the religion writers wrote far fewer stories than did the specialists at the other two papers. Roman Catholics and Jews are the largest religious groups in New York City; Roman Catholicism was the tradition covered most frequently by the religion writers at the Times. Although Judaism was covered less frequently than this explanation suggests it should have been, this may be due to the way news is covered at the Times. Other writers, covering their own beats, produced numerous "Jewish stories" that were not included in this analysis.[17] Because all religion stories appeared in the general news columns, few readers would have noticed which writers covered, or did not cover, a particular tradition. This may have reduced the religion writers' perceived need to mention Judaism during this period.

Although it is noteworthy that each religion writer seems to have given most attention to the religious tradition that is strongest in his newspaper's publication area, an analysis of

the stories also suggested that those groups which were somehow "making news" received the most attention.

During the summer of 1981, religion specialists at the three papers covered national conventions of at least five different Protestant denominations, but more than a single story was afforded only to those conventions where the news generated by activities involved power struggles with the potential for affecting large groups of readers including those not affiliated with the particular denomination holding the convention. As a result, at each of the three newspapers, Baptists and Lutherans received more news coverage outside the local "bulletin board" columns than any other Protestant denominations.

News Values and Story Content: As was suggested by the analysis of denominational coverage in each of the three newspapers, the data on news values in religion news stories suggest that the self-reports of religion journalists are correct. Although the local "bulletin board" columns in both the Star and Times-Dispatch caused each of these papers to carry a significant number of stories that were merely routine announcements or coverage of local events, each of the three newspapers carried a smaller proportion of stories with softer news values than with those associated with hard news. At each of the three papers, there was a higher proportion of stories emphasizing change or conflict than cooperation or human interest. At no paper were there many stories emphasizing violence or mere novelty. (See Table 4)

Consistent with the philosophies of the organizations for which they work, the religion writers at both the Star and Times-Dispatch wrote a relatively high proportion of stories that focused on events within the religious community, while the majority of stories by the Times religion writers downplayed events in order to focus on issues arising from meetings and programs. Nevertheless, the Times-Dispatch writer produced nearly as many issue-oriented stories as event-oriented ones. He also produced, on the average, one story each week analyzing social trends affecting or affected by religion. In sharp contrast, the Star writer concentrated on human interest feature stories which paralleled the paper's news-feature philosophy. (See Table 5)

Although interviews with religion journalists indicate they approve of stories designed to teach about religious beliefs, this study found religion writers actually produce very few such stories. Religious beliefs and practices seemed to be covered only when they were the subject of conflict as they were during the summer of 1981 at the national meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. But even on those occasions, news coverage was more likely to focus on the conflict itself than on the nature of the beliefs or practices that gave rise to the conflict. (See Table 5)

Conclusion

This study found there were similarities in the religion news coverage in the New York Times, Minneapolis Star, and Richmond Times-Dispatch during the summer of 1981. These similarities were, in general, consistent with the findings of previous studies of religion news which suggest that religion news stories are longer, broader in scope and more issue-oriented than they once were. Furthermore, the data suggest that both the differences among the papers and any major differences from the findings of previous research are more likely explained by the news philosophy of a particular newspaper and the structural constraints under which it operates than by any preconceived assumptions about the nature of religion news.

The New York Times, which had no religion news page, and the Richmond Times-Dispatch, which set aside both a page for local religion news and space for a national and international religion round-up column each week, carried more stories longer than 10 column inches than very short items and provided a higher proportion of news with a national or international focus than with a purely local angle. Both news organizations required in-depth coverage of news of more than transitory, local interest.

The Minneapolis Star, which also had a locally-oriented religion page each week, attempted to reach a local audience with locally oriented news-features. Perhaps because of the twin constraints of few newsgathering resources and intense local competi-

tion, the Star carried many more short local and regional news stories than did the other two newspapers.

Because of the format of their religion pages, both the Minneapolis Star and the Richmond Tmes-Dispatch carried a higher proportion of event-oriented stories, many of which were simple announcements or accounts of local meetings or programs, than did the Times. However, at each of the papers there were at least as many stories emphasizing the news values of change and conflict as there were emphasizing the softer news values. Only the Star provided more feature-oriented stories than issue-oriented ones.

Neither news philosophy nor format seemed to have a strong influence on which religious traditions were covered most heavily. The coverage at each paper seemed to reflect both the strength of particular Christian traditions in each newspaper's circulation area and the religion writer's judgments about which groups were "making news" during the summer of 1981. It is also noteworthy that none of the writers devoted even 10 percent of their stories to Judaism and other non-Christian religions.

Although this study was not designed to determine how religion news should be covered, some observations are possible on the basis of this study. An analysis of the religion news found in the New York Times, Minneapolis Star and the Richmond Times-Dispatch indicates that thorough coverage of religion news does not necessarily depend on a newspaper's resources including the size of its staff. Nearly all the religion news stories that appeared in

the New York Times were included among the religion news stories in the Minneapolis Star and the Richmond Times-Dispatch. At the same time, the religion specialists at these two smaller newspapers produced other national or foreign religion news stories that did not appear in the Times. They also wrote many local and regional stories no counterparts for which appeared in the much larger New York Times.

This study also suggests that newspapers interested in providing thorough coverage of religion news should not be too eager to abandon the traditional religion page. If the religion news coverage found in these three newspapers can be considered typical of newspapers in general, it appears that the absence of space set aside for religion news may lead to a sharp decrease in the number of stories reported by the religion specialists without any attendant gain in the length or depth of the coverage.

While it is certainly true that many of the articles that appeared on the religion pages of the Minneapolis Star and the Richmond Times-Dispatch were little more than bulletin board announcements or routine coverage of rather minor local events, it is quite possible that the presence of such stories provides a valuable service to readers. Not only do readership studies indicate this kind of story about local events is very appealing to many readers of religion news,[18] but the practice of grouping them together gives them a value beyond the specific information contained in any particular story. From reading the religion

pages in the Star and Times-Dispatch it was possible to form a mental image of the religious climate in Minneapolis and in Richmond. However, it was quite difficult to form a similar picture for New York City on the basis of the limited and scattered religion news stories found in the Times.

Footnotes

1. Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 4th ed., 1978) pg. 125.

2. Terry Mattingly, "Religion News: No Room at the Inn?" The Quill, 71(1):12-19. 1983.

3. Roderick P. Hart, Kathleen J. Turner and Ralph E. Knupp, "A Theoretical Profile of Religious News: Time, 1959-1976," Journal of Communication 31(3):58-68. 1981; Judith M. Buddenbaum, "Religion in the News: Factors Associated with the Selection of Stories from an International Religion News Service by Daily Newspapers," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1984, pp. 13-27.

4. Janet Tronstad, "A Perspective on Pluralism: An Analysis of Louis Cassel's UPI Column, 'Religion in America,' 1959-1973," unpublished masters thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1977; David G. Bromley, Anson D. Shupe, Jr., and J. C. Ventimiglia, "Atrocity Tales, the Unification Church, and the Social Construction of Evil," Journal of Communication, 29(3):42-53. 1979; Bruce M. Swain, "Married Catholic Priests: A Case Study of Religion Coverage," Newspaper Research Journal, 3(2):18-26. 1982; F. D. Buchstein, "The Role of the News Media in the 'Death of God' Controversy," Journalism Quarterly, 49(1):79-85. 1972; J. W. Whalen, "The Press Opens Up Vatican II," Journalism Quarterly, 44(1):53-61.

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5. Mattingly, op. cit.; Don Ranly, "How Religion Editors of Newspapers View their Jobs and Religion," Journalism Quarterly, 56(4):844-849. 1979; Elizabeth E. Brenner, "The Religion Writers and the Secular Press: An Analytical and Interactional Study of the Religion Writer's Role as Perceived by the Writers, their Superiors, and Religion Leaders," unpublished masters thesis, Michigan State University, 1970; Oscar Hoffmeyer, Jr., "Changes in Religion News Reporting: Dallas Morning News 1948-1972," unpublished masters thesis, East Texas State University, 1973.

6. Warren Breed, "Mass Communication and Sociocultural Integration," in Lewis A. Dexter and David Manning White, eds., People, Society, and Mass Communications (New York: The Free Press, 1964) pp. 190-195.

7. Brenner, op. cit.

8. Hoffmeyer, op. cit.

9. Mattingly, op. cit.

10. Hart, Turner and Knupp, op. cit.

11. Mattingly, op. cit.

12. Hart, Turner and Knupp, op. cit.

13. Information about the news policies of the New York Times, Minneapolis Star, and Richmond Times-Dispatch was obtained through initial telephone interviews with the religion writers from these

papers during July 1981 and through follow-up interviews in December 1983.

Data on the circulation and size of news hole of the Times, Star, and Times-Dispatch, and on the competitiveness of the newspaper markets comes from the 1981 edition of Editor and Publisher. The Star merged with its sister publication the Tribune during the summer of 1982.

Information on religious organizations in the New York City, Minneapolis and Richmond areas comes from local telephone books and from Dennis S. Akey, ed., Encyclopedia of Associations, v. II. (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1981) Section 11.

Church membership figures are from Douglas W. Johnson, Paul R. Picard and Bernard Quinn, eds., Churches and Church Membership in the United States (Washington, D.C.: Glenmary Research Center, 1974) and from Edwin Scott Gaustad, Historical Atlas of Religion in America, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976)

14. Robert L. Stevenson, "Research Methodology," in Robert L. Stevenson and Donald Lewis Shaw, eds., Foreign News and the New World Information Order (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1984) pp. 21-36.

15. Wallace B. Eberhard, "'News Value' Treatments are Far from Consistent among Newswriting Texts," Journalism Educator, 37(1):9-11. 1982.

16. More complete information about the content analysis can be found in Buddenbaum, op. cit., pp. 46-56 and Appendix C.

17. Additional information about the religion news stories by both the religion writers and by non-specialists at the three newspapers can be found in Buddenbaum, op. cit., pp. 193-242.

18. Judith M. Buddenbaum, "News about Religion: A Readership Study," Newspaper Research Journal, 3(2):7-17. January 1982; Galen Rarick, "Readership of the Church Page," ANPA Research Report, 2:34-35. 1967; Robert Root and Harold D. Bolder, "The Church Page: Do Readers Like It?" ANPA Research Report, 1:42-43. 1966.

Table 1

Length of Religion News Stories in Three Newspapers

Length[a]	New York Times (n=28)	Minneapolis Star (n=141)	Richmond Times-Dispatch (n=165)
less than 10 col. in.	3.6%	71.6%	38.2%
10-30 col. in.	71.4%	21.3%	37.0%
31-50 col. in.	25.0%	7.1%	13.9%
51-99 col. in.	----	----	9.7%
over 99 col. in.	----	----	1.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[a]Calculations are based on a standard column inch of eight lines, each with 30 characters. Headlines, illustrations and white space are not inlcuded in the length of stories.

Table 2

Geographic Focus of Religion News Stories in Three Newspapers

Geographic Focus	New York Times (n=28)	Minneapolis Star (n=141)	Richmond Times-Dispatch (n=165)
Local	7.1%	51.8	24.8%
Regional	10.7%	22.0%	18.2%
National	60.7%	21.3%	46.0%
Foreign[a]	21.5	5.0%	10.9%
Total	100.0%	100.1%[b]	99.9%[b]

[a]Only those stories that are primarily about religion outside the United States are included in this category.

[b]Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 3

Religious Focus of Religion News Stories in Three Newspapers

Religion	New York Times (n=28)	Minneapolis Star (n=141)	Richmond Times-Dispatch (n=165)
Catholic[a]	28.6%	16.3%	17.0%
Protestant			
Mainline	17.9%	57.4%	29.1%
Evangelical	21.4%	5.7%	23.0%
Holiness	---	.7%	4.2%
Unspecified[b]	25.0%	15.6%	22.4%
Jewish	7.1%	3.5%	4.2%
Other[c]	---	.7	---
Total	100.0%	99.9%[d]	99.9%[d]

[a]This category includes one story about the Eastern Orthodox religion which appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

[b]This category includes both those stories with general references to Christians or Protestants and those that focus on activities of nondenominational or interdenominational organizations.

[c]This category includes any story about a religion or religious organization not associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition. The only story in this category is about the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

[d]Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 4

News Values in Religion News Stories in Three Newspapers

News Value	New York Times (n=28)	Minneapolis Star (n=141)	Richmond Times-Dispatch (n=165)
Change	32.1%	24.1%	22.4%
Conflict	42.9%	15.6%	37.6%
Tragedy/Violence	---	---	1.8%
Cooperation	3.6%	8.5%	5.5%
Human Interest	17.9%	10.6%	6.7%
Novelty	3.6%	2.8%	1.2%
Coverage[a]	---	38.3%	24.8%
Total	100.1%[b]	99.9%[b]	100.0%

[a]This category includes announcements and routine coverage of meetings and programs for which the probable news values are propinquity, impact and/or timeliness. These news values were not included in the coding scheme because of the difficulty in making the appropriate subjective judgment.

[b]Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 5

Content Focus of Religion News Stories in Three Newspapers

Focus	New York Times (n=28)	Minneapolis Star (n=141)	Richmond Times-Dispatch (n=165)
Beliefs/Practices	10.7%	.7%	1.8%
Events	---	46.8%	37.0%
Projects[a]	10.7%	7.1%	9.1%
Issues	57.1%	15.6%	33.9%
Features[b]	17.9%	28.4%	10.9%
Trends	3.6%	1.4%	7.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[a]This category includes stories about missionary activity, social ministry projects and social services offered by religious organizations on a continuing basis.

[b]This category includes personality profiles, seasonal features and reviews of books, movies and live performances.